

Remarks of Hannah Song  
Sixth Grade Teacher  
Enfield Public Schools

Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee & Education Committee  
February 27, 2008

Good afternoon members of the Education Committee and the Program Review and Investigations Committee. My name is Hannah Song and I am a teacher for the Enfield Public Schools. I am here today to comment on Raised Bill 329 and Raised Bill 330 pertaining to the BEST program.

This is my fourth year of teaching at Prudence Crandall School. Let me first say that I absolutely love my career as an educator. When I realized that the Best portfolio could jeopardize my career I was very scared and anxious while working on it, later finding out that I failed and had to do it again. The Best portfolio is not a valuable form of assessment for second year teachers! It does not measure the most critical aspects of a well rounded educator. I could go on for days on the weaknesses, but I am really here to address the issue of mentoring.

As educators we are taught to always model appropriate behavior and work habits. Why wouldn't that also apply to first year teachers? We need quality mentors to model exemplary teaching methods. We need their guidance and support more than anything during the first 2 years.

My mentor teacher was unable to assist me with completing the Best portfolio because she had absolutely no knowledge or background with the requirements. It was the blind leading the blind. I am not here to speak ill of my mentor because she also was not given any resources or proper training. I was at an advantage because my mentor was actually at my school and had taught my grade level previously. Other first year teachers were paired with mentors who were not even in the same building or the same grade level or subject. We need mentors who are properly trained and also compensated for their time. Hours upon hours were spent planning and preparing on the weekends at her home where her children and dogs were running and playing around us. Require a reduced classroom teaching workload for mentors; districts could

have full-time mentors, part-time mentors, or a combination. There should be no more than 15 first year teachers for a full-time mentor.

Students need consistency, so do we! First year teachers and mentors need consistent and concrete training to make the expectations clear and fair for everyone. Mentoring modules and classes should be required. The rubric used to score the portfolios was too abstract and allowed room for bias and inconsistent scores.

The committee needs to recognize the obvious flaws of the Best portfolio. We recommend that you really take the time to focus on improving this program by taking a closer look at improving the mentoring process. Mentoring is the future! Thank you for your time.